

**Testimony Presented to the Government Administration and Elections Committee
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**Testimony Regarding
House Bill 5236
*An Act Permitting the State to Sell Advertising Space***

Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin and members of the GAE Committee: My name is Randy Fiveash. I am the acting executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism (CCT). I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 5236, "An Act Permitting the State to Sell Advertising Space" on agency websites and on other state property.

Our strategic investments in tourism marketing in past years have created assets of value to potential advertisers and sponsorship partners. For example, statewide online marketing activities for a number of years prior to the \$1 (one dollar) budget generated large followings of both website visitors (2 million annually) and eNewsletter readers (580,000 opt-in subscribers). These online followers offer significant value to both the State and travel-related businesses throughout Connecticut.

Current competitive state travel websites – New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania - accept some form of advertising. Furthermore, offering online advertising opportunities is a hot topic among state travel offices around the country with many actively looking to create the new revenue stream. CCT consistently receives requests from private sector partners requesting advertising and sponsorship opportunities in a variety of our programs -- such as on CTvisit.com, in tourism E-newsletters, and state welcome centers.

There are already examples of how agencies leverage State assets to generate revenue:

- CCT used to publish the *Connecticut Vacation Guide* through a vendor contract generating ad sales revenue that subsidized the state's cost;
- State athletic programs currently accept advertising and sponsorships to offset expenses.

Passing this act will require well thought out implementation practices. If I may offer a few issues/parameters based on our experience:

- Advertisements should be clearly identified as such;
- Most agency sites are ".gov" sites. These do not allow advertising based on federal ".gov" oversight. (The State's official tourism website, www.CTvisit.com would be legally able to accept advertising as it is registered in the ".com" domain.);
- What is considered "acceptable advertising" must be defined. For example, our *Connecticut Vacation Guide* advertising policy states:
 - Advertising must represent the State of Connecticut in a positive manner;
 - Advertising must not include offensive, indecent, obscene and/or libelous material;
 - The State has final approval of all advertisements sold, and may, in its discretion, reject any advertisements on the basis of appropriateness.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.